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ABSTRACT

Research concerning the effects of television violence on children--particularly young children under the age of six--has found that it tends to desensitize them to aggressive behavior and, in some children, promotes aggressive behavior in their play and other interactions with children and adults. This guide is designed to assist early childhood educators in dealing with the aggressive and destructive actions that children imitate from observing violence on television. The guide is focused on young children two through five years old, and on how educators can help children move away from violent play stimulated by television to the healthy, fun, and safe activities that promote growth and development. The introduction provides a general overview of television violence and its effects. Chapter one provides age-appropriate assistance in helping children understand the difference between "real" and "pretend." Chapter two provides age-appropriate activities to teach young children to pretend. Chapter three provides activities for creative play on an age-appropriate level. Chapter four provides information on helping children gain self control and manage feelings. Chapter five provides guidance to educators in communicating with parents about the effects of television violence. Five appendices include book suggestions, professional resources, research summaries, survey results, and advising panel resources. (Author/SD)

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Moving Young Children's Play Away From TV Violence

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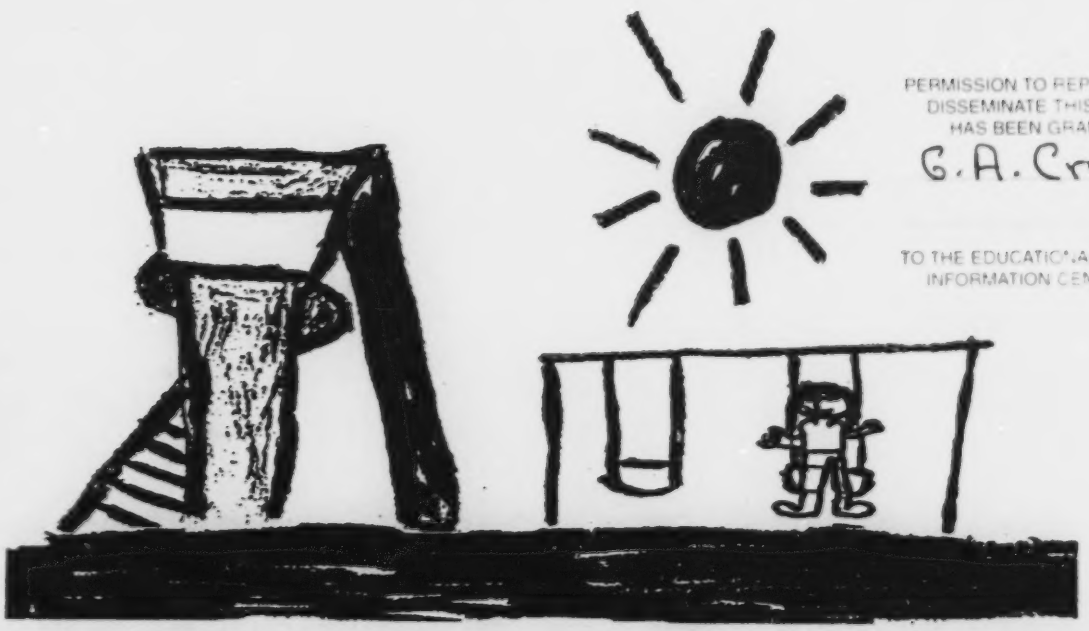

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A LETTER TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Whether you work in a local Head Start program or child care center, care for children in your own home, or teach a preschool or kindergarten class, you are all very special people. Our youngest children are in your care—some for a few hours each day, others for much of the week as parents work or go to school. You nurture these young children, teach them, and help them grow and develop during their first five years of life.

You have a big—and very important—job. And we know it is getting harder and harder to do. You have asked for help in dealing with the new and challenging problems spurred by the violence on television these young children watch. Over and over, you have told us about "Power Rangers", "Ninja Turtles", and other TV characters which come to school with these little children. These TV characters are on the playground, in the activity center, on field trips. They come as toys, clothes, and most particularly in the play of the young children in your charge.

This guide, **Moving Young Children's Play away from TV Violence: A How-To Guide for Early Childhood Educators**, was created for you. We hope it gives you ideas, tools and techniques that move your children's play away from imitating TV violence towards healthy, fun and safe activities which promote their growth and development.

Read through this guide. Try some of the activities. Reach out to parents for their help and involvement. And let us know what you think. You are the real judge of this guide's value and your comments are important to us.

We wish you luck and we hope to hear about your experiences with **Moving Young Children's Play away from TV Violence: A How-To Guide for Early Childhood Educators.**

With best wishes,

The Ready At Five Partnership

Acknowledgements

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Dawn R. England designed this guide. Her "eye" for layout and imaginative use of children's art contributed greatly to the guide's appeal.

We want to offer a special thanks to **Diane Silva**, the writer of this guide. Diane was formerly a public school teacher in Frederick, Maryland, where she taught an Extended Elementary Education Program (EEEP) class for 4-year olds. She labored many nights and weekends to incorporate voluminous information, research, and ideas into the guide. Her diligence, commitment, and experience have been invaluable.

And our sincere appreciation is given to **Mary Kimmins**, Early Childhood Specialist from the Maryland Department of Education, who co-chaired the advisory panel. Mary gently kept us on task with her humor and insight and inspired us by her incredible love and caring for young children.

READY AT FIVE is a statewide partnership to ensure that all Maryland children birth through five get the health care, nutrition, and early childhood programs they need to be successful in school.

The **READY AT FIVE** partners include:

Advocates for Children and Youth
American Academy of Pediatricians, Maryland Chapter
Baltimore Community Foundation
Maryland Business Roundtable for Education
Maryland Committee for Children
Maryland Subcabinet for Children, Youth, and Families
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Preface

Not everyone agrees with what is violence on TV. Each person defines it personally. For one person, it may be the "catastrophe" movies broadcast during prime time. For another, it may include the evening news with its more graphic pictures of crime and violence in our streets. And yet for another, it may be many of the children's shows which portray battles between superheroes such as the Power Rangers and the "bad guys."

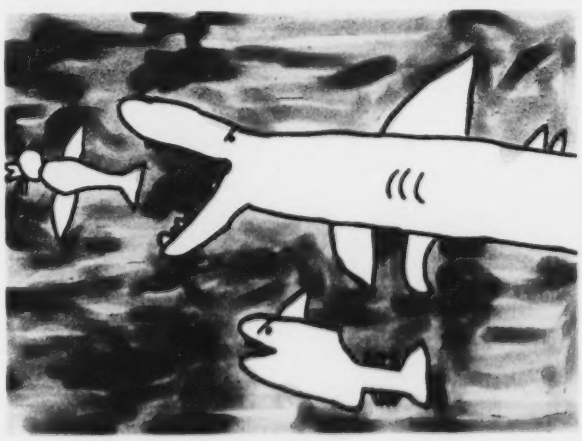
What we know from the research about the effects of watching TV violence on children—particularly young children under the age of six—is that it tends to desensitize them to aggressive behavior. And, indeed, for some young children it promotes aggressive behavior in their play and other interactions with both children and adults.

The best thing about TV is they have shows and commercials and cartoons . . .
– Child

We often hear from today's parents, "I watched violent cartoons as a kid and I'm okay." But today's children are growing up in a very different world than their parents and grand-parents did. One in five children lives in poverty today, a 21% increase since 1970. Violence often grows out of poverty and the inequality it cre-ates in the lives of families. Yet, violence is no respecter of income. Indeed, family violence and child abuse and neglect are on the rise in middle- and upper-income families as well. There has been a startling increase in the violence children witness—often first-hand in their own neigh-borhoods but definitely in the media.

And parents were not bombarded by the toys, food, sheets, lunch boxes and other show-related items which surround today's children. These things are constantly reinforcing the violent TV shows after which they are patterned. Many children go to bed with and wake up to their favorite violent superheroes—a very powerful and pervasive message to these young ones.

Why is this issue of so much concern to early childhood educators? Play is the work of young children. It is how they learn about their world, how they understand problems, how they try to resolve conflict. But early childhood educators everywhere are seeing how the imitative play of violent TV superheroes such as Power Rangers "short circuits" the healthy play and development of young children. And the messages from superheroes—that it's okay to use physical force if you're right—are teaching young children that you solve conflict with violence.



Moving Young Children's Play Away from TV Violence: A How-To Guide for Early Childhood Educators is designed to be a hands-on, practical how-to guide for early childhood educators. It is aimed specifically at the need expressed by these educators for help in dealing with the aggressive and often destructive actions that children imitate from violence on television. It is not a curriculum on conflict resolution. Rather, it very specifically focuses on young children two through five years old and how educators can help these young children move away from and beyond violent play stimulated by TV to the healthy, fun and safe activities that promote growth and development.

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One time I was flipping channels. And then I stopped. I saw a man take a knife and stick it in a persons back. And then he took a gun and shot the other person. And then he took a bat and beat both of the people to death. The show was called One Life to Live.

– Child

What do early childhood educators think about the effects of TV violence on young children's play?

If you have ever worked with young children, you probably don't need a survey to tell you how violence portrayed on TV affects young children. But have you wondered if other early childhood educators in Maryland see violent TV as a problem? The **READY AT FIVE PARTNERSHIP** surveyed early childhood educators across the state to get their views on how TV violence is affecting young children. Look at the results of this survey of your colleagues!

- ✔ Nearly all early childhood educators surveyed are worried about the impact of TV on young children's play.
- ✔ There was great concern among those surveyed that young children are imitating television violence.
- ✔ Most early childhood educators who responded to the survey reported a recent increase in violent play in young children.
- ✔ Respondents wanted activities to help young children understand that what's on TV may not be OK in real life.
- ✔ Early childhood educators surveyed said parents needed to be more involved and wanted materials to use to discuss with parents how TV violence affects children.

(For a full description of the results from this survey see Appendix D)

What are the facts about young children and TV violence?

We know young children are watching a lot of television. The question is how much TV are they watching and what are they watching?

- ✔ Preschoolers watch about three-and-a-half hours of television a day.
- ✔ By the time a child gets to kindergarten, that child has watched about 5,000 hours of TV. That's more time than he or she will spend in an elementary classroom!
- ✔ There are about 32 acts of violence per hour on Saturday morning cartoons—compared to only 5-6 violent acts on prime time TV.
- ✔ By 6th grade, a child will have seen about 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 acts of violence on TV.
- ✔ Children who watch a large number of violent programs tend to favor using aggression to resolve conflicts.

- ✔ Children who watch a great deal of TV violence are more fearful than other people—experiencing the "mean world syndrome."
- ✔ Many young children do not understand that television characters are actors who are paid to entertain us.

How does TV violence affect young children today?

We know that too much TV isn't good for young children. The question remains how does the violence young children watch on TV influence them?

TV Violence Influences the Way Young Children Play

Young children who watch a lot of TV are less likely to play creatively. These young children don't use their own ideas to play. They copy or imitate their play ideas from TV. Their play is more likely to be violent play.

TV Violence Influences the Way Young Children Solve Problems

Young children who watch a lot of violent TV are more likely to use violence to solve problems. Of course, this often makes their problems worse and can cause harm to others— playmates and friends, adults, pets—it doesn't stop with the child but expands into an ever-widening circle.

What is the difference between creative and imitative play?

What is imitative play?

Young children learn about the world through imitation and they imitate what they see. During imitative play, the child repeats specific actions without developing new props, characters, ideas, or story lines. Some imitations are good. For example, many children watch their parents care for infants and imitate these nurturing behaviors. Other imitations can be destructive and violent. Violent themes expressed in imitative play are often based on violent scenes watched on TV. For example, many children mimic martial arts behaviors they have seen on television which often result in others being hurt. Imitating violent TV does not help children learn positive play or social skills.

What is creative play?

As children develop physically and socially, play can become more creative. Each child moves towards creative play at his or her own rate. Creative play results from children building on their own knowledge and experiences. They turn play into a unique creation by adding new props, characters, ideas, and story lines.

How do we help?

Although it's not quite as simple as 1-2-3, there are ways early childhood educators can help to move young children away from TV violence to more creative play. We need to be aware of young children who are constantly imitating TV violence. We need to help young children learn creative ways to play.

Who needs help?

Young children whose play often involves violence are at the greatest risk of becoming violent adults.

When is the best time to change a child's behavior?

During a child's early years it is easier to change his or her behavior. We can help children learn creative play as a part of normal growth and development. By helping children learn non-violent ways of playing, we can help children develop non-violent ways to solve problems.

What can we do?

Educators and parents can work together to:

1. *Act as role models, showing nonviolent ways to solve problems*
2. *Help young children to play in different ways, such as creative and cooperative play*
3. *Help young children understand that most programs on TV are performed by actors who are being paid to entertain us*
4. *Help young children understand what the difference is between real and pretend in developmentally appropriate ways*

Remember: There are differences between the way 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds understand real and pretend.

How can you use this guide?

Reducing the amount of TV which young children watch is important—but we also need to help young children deal with the TV they do watch. We need to help young children find ways to deal with TV's influence. This guide includes lessons which help young children learn to cope with the influence of TV.

TV seems to be taking over young children's play. They lose control. They don't use their imaginations.

- Preschool Teacher

Chapter 1, Understanding real and pretend, *offers lessons on teaching young children the difference between real and pretend.*

Chapter 2, Teaching young children to pretend, *gives ideas on how to teach young children to pretend in positive ways.*

Chapter 3, Teaching young children to play creatively, *provides ideas for helping young children to use their imagination in positive ways.*

Chapter 4, Gaining self-control, *has tips for helping children play safely.*

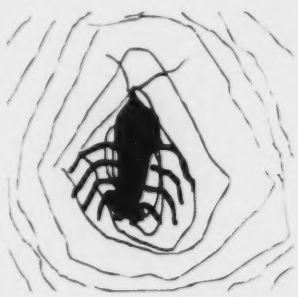
Chapter 5, Communicating with parents, *provides ideas, information, and a sample letter for educators to use when seeking support from parents.*

Finally, the guide includes appendices of supportive materials and a list of resources to use with young children for creating play activities.

Hopefully, after using ideas from this guide, you and the young children you care for will not be controlled by the TV. You will see more creative play. You will see less violent play. You still may not be able to turn off their TV at home. But you will have given young children some tools to help reduce TV's violent influence!

How to help young children understand the difference between real and pretend

We know that many young children don't understand what is real and what is pretend. We see this in their play. We hear this in their talk. We even see it in the way these young children solve problems. The world of television mixes with the real world in young children's minds.



We need to help these young children understand what is real. They need to know that they are real. You are real. Their mommies and daddies are real. They also need to understand pretend. They need to recognize that people on TV act out parts. You can pretend a shoe is a telephone or a box is a car. By teaching these skills, young children can begin to sort out real and pretend on TV and use pretend positively to expand their play.

We need to make sure that the activities we choose match the child's understanding of what is real and pretend!

Young children of the same age can see real and pretend differently! In fact, a 3-year old may show the understanding of a 4-year old. A 4-year old may show the understanding of a 2-year old. This means we must look at each child to find the best activities. In the conversations on the next few pages, you will find examples of how a typical 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-year old may look at real and pretend. Use these examples as a guide for identifying the level of the young children you care for. Then use the activities at the end of this chapter to help young children develop their understanding of what is real and what is pretend.

What to do with 2's?

Two-year olds live in the real world. They often don't understand the difference between real and pretend. This is typical for children this young. The play of most 2-year olds is imitative since they copy the actions they see. These children haven't developed the words to describe real and pretend. Early childhood educators need to help 2-year olds develop the language of real and pretend, provide them with a chance to play in the "pretend" world, and provide activities that focus on what is real. Then they will begin to understand the difference.

Let's listen to the conversation of a 2-year old talking about real and pretend with his mother...

Billy's mother: *Is mommy real or pretend?*
Billy: *Mommy real or pretend.*
Billy's mother: *Is Billy real or pretend?*
Billy: *Real or pretend.*
Billy's mother: *Are Power Rangers real or pretend?*
Billy: *I don't know—real or pretend.*

Obviously, Billy can't tell the difference between real and pretend and is just repeating what his mother has said. Additionally, Billy does not have the language or concept of real and pretend.

Caution: Be careful not to read stories that are too scary because 2-year olds may not understand that monsters and other characters are pretend!

What to do with 3's?

Three-year olds use the words real and pretend in their play. They are starting to develop an idea of real and pretend but the differences are still not clear. They seem to see a difference between pretend objects, such as dolls and toys, and real objects like their family pet. In fact, the 3-year old may be confused and see a third group—real, but only on TV. The difference between real and pretend is not yet clear.

Let's listen to the conversation of a 3-year old talking about real or pretend with his mother...

Mother: *Is Princess (pet dog) real or pretend?*
Sarah: *(giggles) Real!*
Mother: *Is Cinderella real or pretend?*
Sarah: *Real—I just saw her at Disney World.*
Mother: *Is 'My Little Pony' (cartoon) real or pretend?*
Sarah: *Real, but only on TV.*
Mother: *Is Barney real or pretend?*
Sarah: *Real—but only on TV.*
Mother: *Is your Barbie doll real or pretend?*
Sarah: *(laughs) She's pretend—all toys are pretend.*
Mother: *What about Power Rangers? Are they real or pretend?*
Sarah: *Real, but only on TV.*
Mother: *Could they visit our house?*
Sarah: *No, they're only on TV.*
Mother: *What about the Power Rangers at the Mall?*
Sarah: *They are real.*

What to do with 4's and 5's?

Four- and five-year olds are beginning to see the difference between real and pretend. They have developed the words and are able to describe what is real and what is pretend on TV. Some four- and five-year olds may believe all TV programming is pretend. However, in some cases, these children can see the difference between types of TV programming (e.g., the evening news vs. Power Rangers). Additionally, children in this age group understand the role of costumes in creating pretend characters. These young children enjoy pretending to be other people.

Let's listen to a 5-year old talk about real and pretend...

Mother: *Is Buddy (pet dog) real or pretend?*

Caran: *Real, Mom!*

Mother: *Is Cinderella real or pretend?*

Caran: *Pretend.*

Mother: *Is Barney real or pretend?*

Caran: *Pretend.*

Mother: *How do you know Barney is pretend?*

Caran: *Because he is on TV and I know that television is pretend.*

Mother: *Is there anything on TV that isn't pretend?*

Caran: *The news.*

Mother: *Are the Power Rangers real?*

Caran: *No, they're on TV and they're pretend.*

Mother: *What if you saw the Power Rangers at the store?*

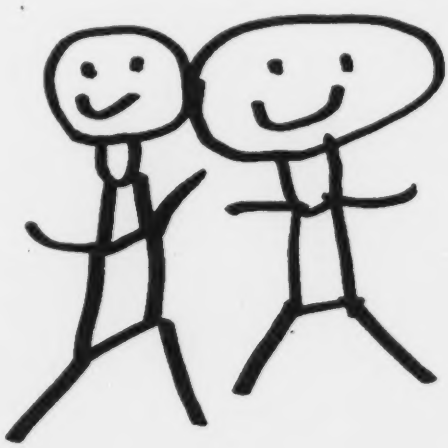
Caran: *Then they still are not real because they are just people in costumes.*

Activities that help young children understand real and pretend

These activities may be best suited for the age(s) shown following each activity. But remember, every child learns at his or her own pace!

1. If you have a puppet theater in your classroom turn it into a TV. If not, build a TV out of a large cardboard box. Create your own puppet shows based on your favorite TV characters to demonstrate that what we see on TV is just pretend. *(4's, 5's)*

2. Dress up like a superhero. Have the young children ask you questions about your life. Through your answers, show the young children that the superhero is just a person in a costume called an actor. Later, follow this activity up by letting the young children take the role of other superheroes and answer questions. *(4's, 5's)*



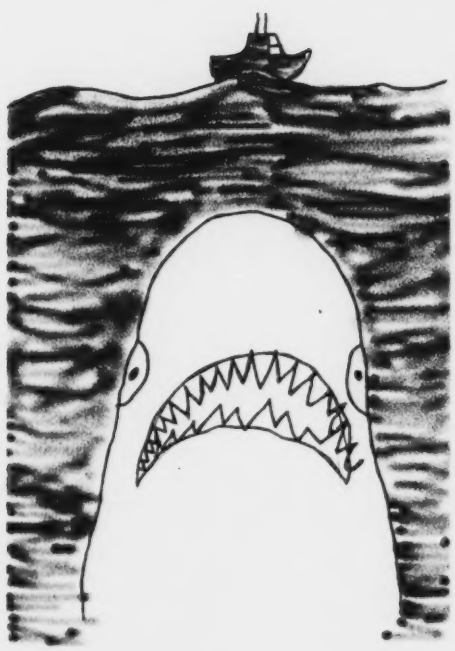
3. Brainstorm a list of magical characters from TV. Decorate socks or paper bags to make a puppet of your favorite pretend character. Then, create a new action story for your character to tell. *(4's, 5's)*

4. Read *Best Friends*. Discuss with the young children some things friends can pretend to do. With a friend, have the young children draw something they could imagine and pretend to do together. *(4's, 5's)*

5. Write real and pretend stories as a class. Put them together in a booklet. Young children should illustrate stories. Follow-up activities could include sorting the pictures into real and pretend groups. *(5's)*

6. Show the young children a pretend show (it should be PBS program or other show which does not depict violence). Turn the room into a TV studio. Have young children work in small groups with an adult to develop a sequel to the story they viewed. Help them recognize that they are creating a pretend story just like the TV writers do. You could take this a step farther if you want them to produce the show. Use a video camera and let them act it out! *(5's)*

7. Compare books to TV shows. Have an adult dress up like an author carrying a book and another adult dress up like a TV producer carrying a camera. Have them tell what they do to create their stories. Allow the young children to ask questions. Compare and contrast. Help young children to discover that they are both pretending to be characters (author and TV producer) and creating a story using their imagination. *(5's)*



8. Set up your own filming studio and theater. Encourage young children to create their own shows, act them out, and watch themselves. *(5's)*

9. Invite a martial arts teacher to come to school. Interview him/her to find out what his/her life is really like. Why do they do martial arts? This activity could be extended to interview a military person or other people who seem somewhat mysterious to the young children. *(4's, 5's)*

10. Go on a walking field trip with your class, use a Polaroid camera to take pictures of people doing "real" things. Then, gather pictures of pretend "characters" doing "pretend" things (cartoons, books, toys). Help young children sort the pictures into real and pretend. Make a sorting board for young children to use. *(3's - 5's)*

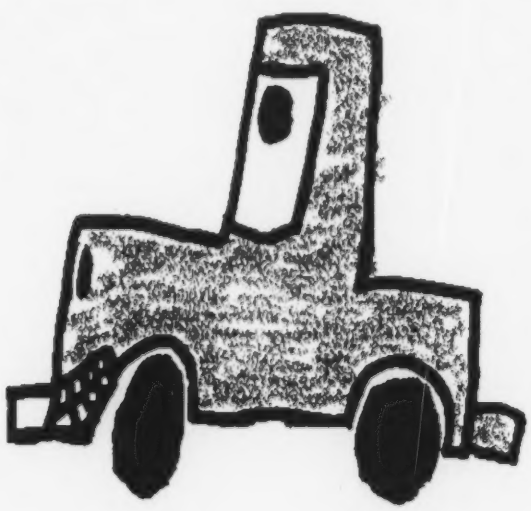
11. Create your own classroom real theater where only real shows can be shown. These could be tapes, Public Television, or filmstrips. Serve popcorn, get comfortable and enjoy the flick. After viewing, the young children can make posters of their favorite real characters. Make sure to label their drawings! *(5's)*

12. Contrast with activity #11 by creating your own classroom pretend theater where only pretend shows can be shown. These could be tapes, Public Television, filmstrips, or puppet plays. Serve popcorn, get comfortable and enjoy the flick. After viewing, the young children can make posters of their favorite pretend characters. Make sure to label their drawings! *(5's)*

13. Read *Where the Wild Things Are*. What TV shows have wild things in them? Let young children pretend to be a wild thing and dance to wild music. Make a wild thing puppet. Build a "wild thing" setting by creating a jungle, etc... within a bedroom! *(3's - 5's)*

14. Play the game "Can Cars Fly?" where you ask the children questions that help them judge what is real and what is pretend. Have children put their thumbs up when the answer is "real" and down when the answer is "pretend." (For example, Can cars fly? (pretend), Can dogs talk? (pretend), Can cars drive? (real). Think of silly pretend things that happen on TV. Young children can even help you come up with the list of silly, pretend statements. *(5's)*

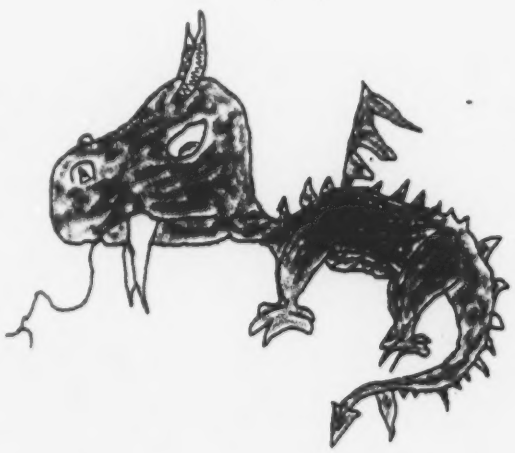
15. If you have older children in your care as well as preschoolers, work with the older children and have them draw something from TV, for example, a sports hero, a superhero lifting a house, or a talking rabbit. Then, pair an older child up with the preschooler. Have the older child help the preschooler decide whether the pictures are real or pretend. You can later combine the pictures drawn into a big real or pretend book that the preschoolers will love to look through. *(4's, 5's)*



16. Set up a "Land of TV" section in the classroom. Stock it with dress-up clothes for a TV theme you have been discussing with the children. Make sure to include the props and settings. The children can pretend to be any character they want in the "Land of TV" but when they leave the "Land of TV" they must become themselves again. Be sure to choose a non-violent TV theme. *(2's - 5's)*

17. Read and talk about dragons (see Appendix A for book titles). Are dragons real or pretend? What do they look like? What do they do? Create a pretend dragon using boxes, paint and paper. Do this with the young children so they can see the dragon being created. Have a child get in the dragon head of the box. Attach chart paper to the back and turn it into the dragon's tail. Have the young children parade through the school, center, or neighborhood. This would be a great activity to tie into Chinese New Year. *(3's - 5's)*

18. Read books from one of the dramatic play themes found in Appendix A. Make bag puppets of your favorite villain character. Use markers, colored paper, scrap fabric, etc... Have young children play with their puppet character. Talk about each puppet, "Who is your pretend puppet?" What TV character is your villain puppet like? *(3's - 5's)*



19. Make stick puppets of your favorite real person. Attach a picture of the child's favorite real person to make the puppet. *(4's, 5's)*

20. Have a pretend character day. Allow young children to dress as their favorite pretend character. This is a great way to get parents involved. Be sure to set rules for the day. *(2's - 5's)*

21. Tell made-up stories about pretend TV characters. This can be sequential story telling where each child adds a piece to the story. *(5's)*

22. Use pantomime to rock a baby, have a snowball fight, or go on a picnic—without using any props! *(2's - 5's)*

How to teach young children to pretend

Because many young children have spent so much time in front of the TV, their skills at pretending aren't very good. They haven't developed their imagination. But young children can learn to pretend.

They can learn how to make objects become pretend things (a block becomes a telephone).

They can learn how to pretend to be characters from TV, books, or real-life.

They can even learn how to make up their own stories and act them out.

Young children should be able to pretend. When young children can pretend, they can learn to take control of their play rather than letting the TV control their play.

Read the following conversations to see how young children can learn to pretend. Then try the activities at the end of the chapter to help the children you work with become experts at pretending!

The young children would play the TV story, but they wouldn't go beyond it.

- Child Care Worker

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What to do with 2's?

Two-year olds have difficulty pretending without using realistic objects and having adult encouragement. However, through suggestions and questioning an adult can help young children develop pretend play. In the example below, the child learns how a rope can become a hose and how a table and chairs can become a fire truck. A two year old can begin to see how fun pretending can be!

Let's listen to the conversation of a 2-year old learning to pretend...

Stevie: *I don't have anything to play!*
Teacher: *Why don't you pretend to be a firefighter like in the book we just read?*
Stevie: *I don't know how to be a firefighter.*
Teacher: *Why don't you drive your truck?*
Stevie: *I don't have a truck.*
Teacher: *What could you use for your truck?*
Stevie: *We don't have a truck.*
Stevie and the teacher walk around to find something for a pretend truck.

Teacher: *What about the chairs and the little table? Could we make them into a truck?*
Stevie shrugs his shoulders then begins arranging the chairs.

Teacher: *Great truck, what about a hose?*
Stevie looks around the room and can't find a hose
Stevie: *I can't find a hose.*

Stevie and the teacher walk around the room looking for something that could be a hose. Finally, they decide on a jump rope.

What to do with 3's?

Three-year olds also may have difficulty pretending without using realistic objects and having adult encouragement. However, as with 2-year olds, through suggestions and questioning an adult can help young children develop pretend play. In the example below, the child learns that chairs and beds and bowls for people can become chairs and beds and bowls for bears. A three-year old can begin to see much how fun pretending can be!

Let's listen to the conversation of a 3-year old learning to pretend...

Sally: *I don't have anything to play!*
Teacher: *Why don't you pretend to be Goldilocks?*
Sally: *I don't know how to be Goldilocks.*
Teacher: *Why don't you make a bear's house in housekeeping?*
Sally: *I don't have any bear stuff.*
Teacher: *What could you use for bear stuff?*
Sally: *We need chairs and beds and bowls and bears.*

Sally and the teacher walk around to find bear stuff for the house.

Teacher: *What should we do with the bear stuff? What else could we put in the bear house? What else do the bears do?*

Sally shrugs her shoulders then begins arranging the house.

Teacher: *Great, now who are you going to be?*
Sally: *I am hungry, I'll be a bear.*

What to do with 4's and 5's?

Believe it or not, many four- and five-year olds still do not know how to pretend. But these same children can learn how to pretend by responding to suggestions and questioning. In the example below, Miss Sally helps Mollie see how boxes can become a castle. She helps Mollie build a land of pretend. Mollie is beginning to see how fun and easy pretending can be!

Let's listen to a 4-year old learn to pretend...

Mollie: *I don't have anything to play!*
Miss Sally: *Why don't you pretend to be a knight like in the book we read?*
Mollie: *I don't know how to be a knight.*
Miss Sally: *Why don't you make a castle?*
Mollie: *I don't know how to make a castle.*
Miss Sally: *What could you use for your castle?*
Mollie: *I don't know.*

Mollie and Miss Sally walk around the room looking for something to make a castle.
Miss Sally: *What about the boxes? Could we make them into a castle?*

Mollie shrugs her shoulders then begins arranging the boxes.
Teacher: *Great castle! Where is the door?*
Mollie: *The door is here.*
Miss Sally: *Could you draw it on?*
Mollie: *I can and then we could cut it out.*

Activities that help teach young children to pretend

These activities may be best suited for the age(s) shown following each activity. But remember, every child learns at his or her own pace!

1. With young children, think of ideas that they could play in each of the room's play areas. Hang pictures of activities that characters can do in different dramatic play areas (for example, go to the movies, change the baby, call the doctor). Use these pictures to spur young children on in their play. Change the pictures often to suggest new ideas. *(4's, 5's)*

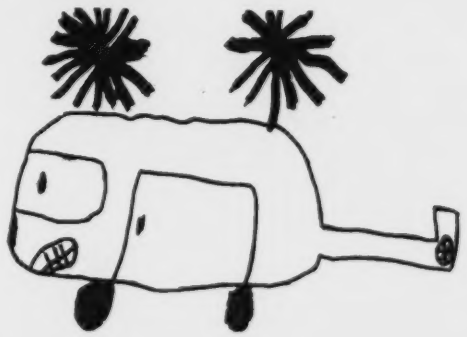
2. Pass around a common object like a shoe, jump rope, or block. Ask the young children to share an idea that they could pretend the object is when they are playing the role of their favorite superhero. For example, the rope could be a hose, snake, or telephone. What would they have their superhero do with the object that would not hurt anybody? *(3's, 4's)*

3. Bring in boxes of different sizes and shapes. Pass a box around and ask the young children to tell the class what they would use it for when they are playing. As a follow-up, turn the boxes into the young children's ideas by painting them, cutting them, and decorating them. For example, the box might become a race car that the child can climb inside. *(3's - 5's)*

4. Pass around a container filled with different TV characters' pictures. The young-children then pull out a picture from the container and act out the character for the rest of the class to guess. *(5's)*

5. Play with the young children! When they imitate TV or book characters, ask them questions that lead to new play. For example: Where are you going? What are you doing? What happens next? Remember, an adult's modeling is an excellent way to get young children to expand their play. *(2's - 5's)*

6. Bring in a box of dress-up clothes. Have each child dress up in an outfit of their choice and tell the class who they are pretending to be. *(3's - 5's)*



7. After play time, have the young children share with each other the pretend ideas they used during play time. *(3's - 5's)*

8. Place big blocks in the middle of the circle. Hollow blocks work great for this activity. Have the young children watch as you create a form of transportation using the blocks. Let the young children drive your creation. Then, have the young children work together to build another form of transportation on their own. *(3's - 5's)*

9. Watch Mr. Rogers with young children. Focus on the land of make believe. With the young children build your own land of make believe using boxes, recycled materials. Be sure to supply the young children with props like crowns, wands, and robes. *(3's - 5's)*

10. Watch Barney with the young children and create a play with the young children focusing on the theme introduced by Barney. For example, build a fire truck out of cardboard boxes. Make uniforms out of raincoats. Make props out of recycled materials. Young children will love becoming firefighters in their play! *(3's - 5's)*

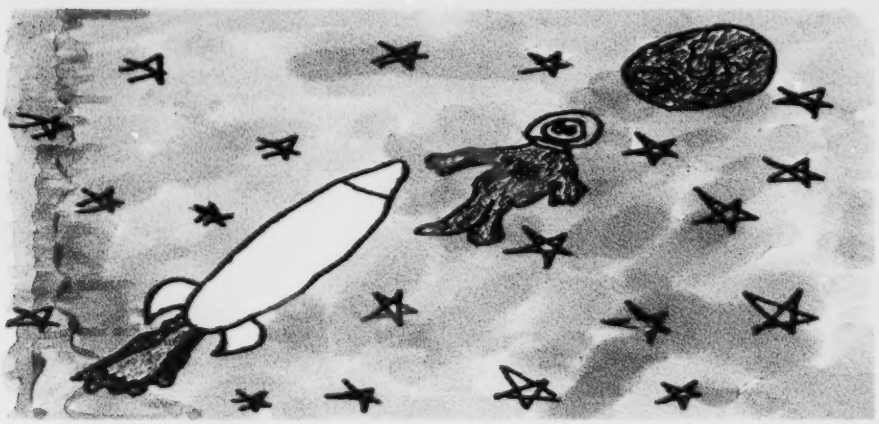
11. Practice pantomimes with children. These can be TV-related or activities from their everyday lives. *(4's, 5's)*

How to teach young children to play creatively

Now that you've shown the young children how to pretend in Chapter Two, this chapter will help young children practice their pretend skills.

Play is children's work. They are working at growing up! Young children need to practice using their imaginations as they play. They need to practice their pretending. Young children need to have a lot of different play experiences to help them practice their pretend play skills.

Once they feel comfortable pretending and using their imaginations, they can go beyond the stories they know—both stories in books and stories on TV. They can make up their own stories!



How can we use literature to move children beyond TV characters?

We know that experience and knowledge is needed in order for children to use their imaginations. Television does provide experience and knowledge which children can use in their imaginative play. The problem is that we are often concerned with the type and quality of the play generated by TV.

In this chapter, we encourage early childhood educators to move children beyond the limitations of television characters and involve children in theme-related characters from children's books and stories. These characters can add much to the young child's repertoire of creative play skills.

The more time young children spent watching the TV, the less time they spent using their imaginations.

-Preschool Teacher

Why does literature work so well in developing children's creative play?

1. Books provide children with knowledge and experience needed to imagine.

2. Books allow children to rearrange bits and pieces of characters and settings into fantasy.

3. Creativity comes through language.

4. Books and the stories they contain serve as a model for language.

5. Books arouse children's curiosity, thoughts, hopes, and discoveries.

6. Books can provide positive, exciting characters for creative play.

What to do with 2's?

Because two-year olds do not have lots of experiences to draw from, a two-year old's play is usually repetitive and copies something he or she has seen many times. At this point, early childhood educators need to offer new experiences and the opportunity to play. This means, the more learning experiences (for example, a trip to a grocery store, fire station, park, or restaurant) we can give two-year olds, the more choices they will have in their dramatic play. This play time will also help 2-year olds develop their language.

Let's watch 2-year olds play creatively...

Mrs. McKay has just read her young children a story about the grocery store. Yesterday, she took the young children on a field trip to the grocery store. They saw the bakery, meat counter, cash registers, and the trucks unloading in the back. She even videotaped the trip so that the children could view the trip later.

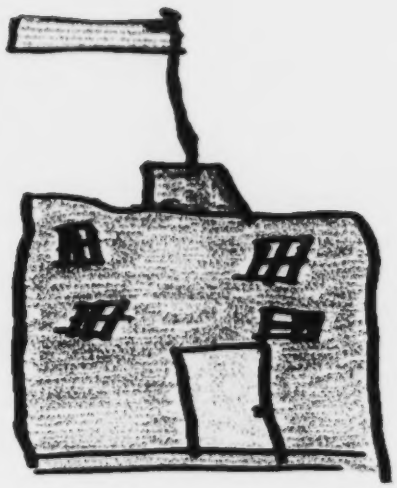
Today Mrs. McKay is going to set up the grocery store with the young children. The young children will be able to create their own play using their imagination and pretend ideas.

During their play, Jessica wears the baker's hat as she rolls the play dough into cookies. Tommy arranges the boxes that should be loaded into the truck. A few children vie for the cash register and play money at the checkout counter. The children are imitating behavior they have seen at the grocery store. This type of play gives two-year olds lots of experiences that they can draw on as they begin to play creatively.

What to do with 3's?

Three-year olds are learning when they repeat their own play ideas (for example, pushing the shopping cart, dressing the baby). Play helps them understand their world. Three-year olds become more independent in their play. We often hear them say, "I can do it by myself!" Three-year olds are interested in babies and the work of running a home. This type of play gives three-year olds a chance to learn more about themselves and their families. Three-year olds play by themselves, next to another child, or with one or two other children. Three-year olds need lots of play time to practice their ideas.

Let's watch 3-year olds play creatively...



Mrs. Brandt has just read her young children a story about a fire station and watched a video about fire fighters. Yesterday, she took the young children on a field trip to the local fire station. They saw the inside of the station, including where the fire fighters sleep when on duty, the central telephone bank where emergency calls come in, and a fire truck with all its equipment. Today Mrs. Brandt is going to set up a fire station with the young children. The young children will be able to create their own play using their imagination and pretend ideas.

During their play, Anne practices sliding down the pole on the jungle gym as if she were responding to a fire. Sean has put all the toy telephones in one place to answer emergency calls. A few children have brought the big blocks into the "fire station" to serve as a fire truck. Although the children are not truly playing together, they are playing creatively.

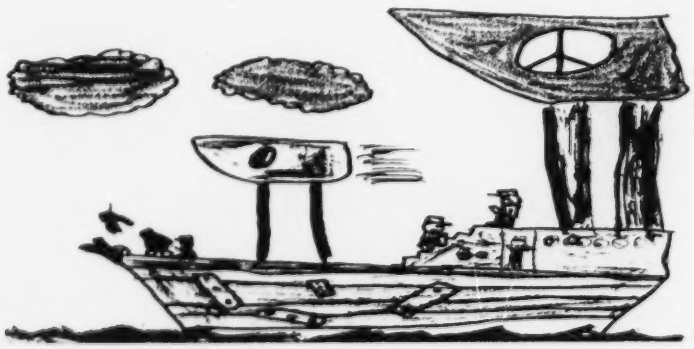
What to do with 4's and 5's?

Four- and five-year olds like making up new play. They can begin making up their own people and stories. They can give details about their play. For example, they can make up play ideas from their community, world, or make-believe. Four- and five-year olds are usually able to join small groups. They are learning to share and take turns. Four- and five-year olds can begin making plans and following through. They are able to ask adults for help, too!

Let's watch 4- and 5-year olds play creatively...

Mrs. Anderson has just read her young children a story about a pirate ship. Yesterday, they watched the film ***Peter Pan****. They have also looked at many pictures of boats. Today Mrs. Anderson is going to give the young children some big boxes and sheets that they can use to build a pirate ship.*

During the play period, the children are busily organizing the boxes, chairs, and tables to create the ship. They are choosing their own roles and acting out characters. As they play, the children ask Mrs. Anderson what they can use to make the plank. Mrs. Anderson offers some possibilities and the young children are back to playing. The young children are using their imagination and pretend ideas to make play fun!



Activities that help children play creatively

These activities may be best suited for the age(s) shown following each activity. But remember, every child learns at his or her own pace!

1. Use themes from literature to develop your children's creative play. Read children books on a theme (see Appendix A). Brainstorm with the children how they can turn the play areas into the theme you are reading about.

Theme: Castles
Books: See Appendix A
Brainstorm: What characters could live in a castle? What are the parts of castle? What could you do in the ballroom? Where could the kitchen be? What props do we need? Build the setting. Provide the props and costumes. Give the children time to play. *(4's, 5's)*

2. Before play time, you can encourage children to develop new characters in their play by playing a game called "You be the... I'll be the..." Fill a container with slips of paper with different real and make-believe characters from TV and children's literature. The young children can help you make the list. Let each child choose a character from the container and role play during small group time. *(4's, 5's)*

3. Working with a small group of young children, have them write a TV story of their own. Give the young children some objects and characters to build the story around (for example, a bunny, bear, magic flute, golden egg, and a basket). Help young children create their own story using these items. Then, have the materials available for them to act it out during play time. *(5's)*

4. Have a box of recycled materials available to create props for their play. Brainstorm with the young children how they could make the props they need. *(2's - 5's)*

5. Developing a superhero! Have the young children choose a favorite superhero. What do they like about the superhero? What don't they like about the superhero? List the things that they would do the same or differently if they were a superhero. Have the young children illustrate themselves as a superhero. Have the young children design their own superhero. *(5's)*

The violent show that I watch is COPS. It has many weapons on it. It has police push people to the ground. They let dogs bite them.

– Child

6. Read theme-related books to the young children (see Appendix A). View theme-related TV programs and videos. Have children make up different endings for stories. Work with young children to write sequels to the stories. Encourage them to use the content from these books in their dramatic play. *(5's)*

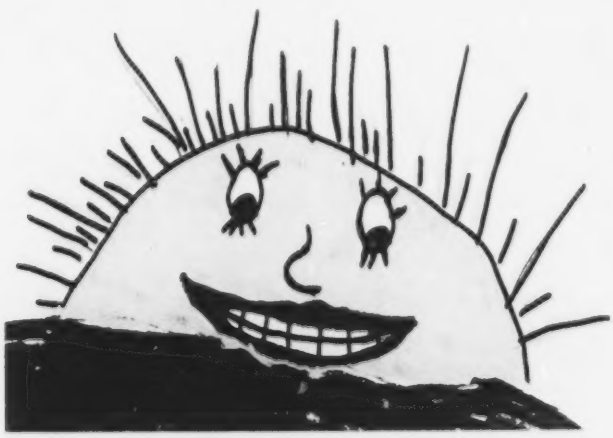
7. Have the young children create their own puppets of their favorite media character. They can use socks, bags, sticks, paper plates. Allow the young children to use the puppets to act out their ideas. *(3's - 5's)*

8. Watch episodes of Barney and Friends or other programs with a theme. Use the show to widen the young children's experience base. Next, provide the young children with the appropriate props or materials to make props, costumes, and settings. Play with the young children and talk with them about their play: What are you doing? What do you need? What can I do? Where are we going? *(2's - 5's)*

9. Take the young children on as many field trips as possible to give them lots of firsthand experiences. Extend these field trips by creating settings for them to imitate and extend their play. These trips don't have to cost anything—take the children to the bank, the library, the grocery store, etc. *(2's - 5's)*

10. Make puppets of their favorite media character. Allow the young children to use the puppets to act out their ideas. Ask them to solve problems in different ways (for example, "You can only use your hands", "You can only use words", etc.) *(2's - 5's)*

11. Go cloud watching! Take the children outside and have them lie on a blanket and look up to see what they see in clouds. Talk about how the clouds change shape and how different children see different shapes. A good book to reinforce this activity is *It Looks Like Spilled Milk*. *(5's)*



12. Read a story through to the end. Then read the same story part way through, stop at a crucial point, and ask the children to make up a new ending. *(4's, 5's)*

Experiences from Maryland early childhood educators

In the survey and during focus groups conducted by the **READY AT FIVE PARTNERSHIP** of early childhood educators across the state, story after story was shared of how aggressive play was on the rise. Many educators saw a clear link with television programs watched by young children. The three stories below give a glimpse of what is happening in classrooms and child care settings across Maryland.

I really became interested in the effect of TV on children when I was teaching preschool and the program *He-Man* was first aired on TV. In our playground sand boxes, we had used sugar scoops for shovels for years. As soon as *He-Man* began, the scoops suddenly became weapons. The boys, especially, would run to the sand boxes as soon as they could, grab the scoops, hold them as swords, and immediately mimic the sword fighting they had witnessed on TV. I was so saddened by the violent, aggressive behavior this provoked in those nice children. It definitely affects children and the results are almost always negative.

Preschool teacher

In my group of 10 children who are all four years old, four boys spend a large amount of time in collision play. Everything collides, cars, blocks, stuffed animals, chairs, kids, whatever is available. They can be easily directed to another form of play. But, collision play appears at the start of each free play time and recurs even after redirecting. Outdoors they collide on big wheels and engage in martial arts play.

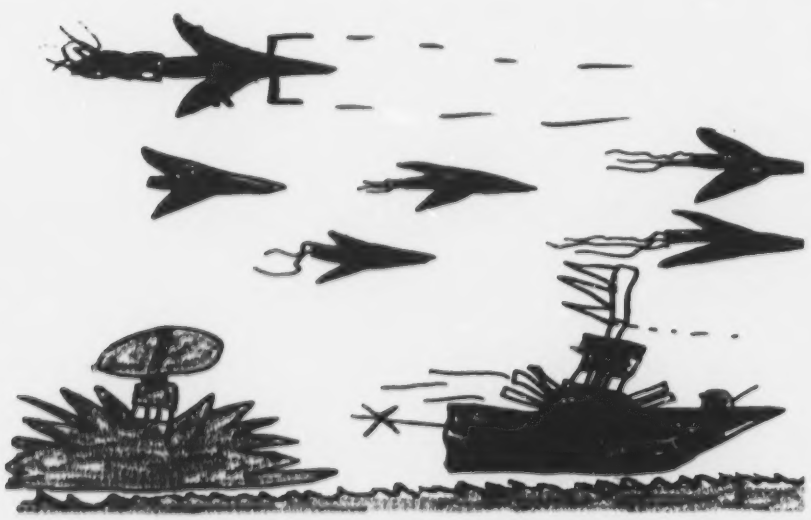
Child care provider

I have indeed noticed a marked increase in violence in the 11 years I've taught prekindergarten and kindergarten. There are two incidences I would like to share.

In the first, two boys with a history of aggressive, martial arts play continued to mock fight after reminders from me to stop. Several minutes later, one child threw the other down on the ground and caused a fractured collar bone. The next day, my principal spoke to my children about the seriousness of what had happened the day before.

The very next day, in a second incident, a little girl found a white plastic table knife on the playground and began to chase her friends, making stabbing motions with it and frightened her friends.

Kindergarten teacher



"Expanding" TV play can really work

Stephen and Paul are playing on the playground. They are finger shooting at each other and acting out their typical good guy/bad guy routine. The activity repeats itself over and over.

After recognizing the play is not going beyond what the children have seen on TV, the teacher addresses the two children.

Teacher: *Are you hurting each other?*

Paul responds: *Yes, I killed him.*

Teacher: *What about the safety rule—you know, we don't hurt people in school?*

They both shrug their shoulders.

Teacher: *What else could you do to get the bad guys that wouldn't hurt them?*

Stephen: *We could freeze the bad guys.*

Play continues following the freeze the bad guys theme. Sometime later Paul runs to the teacher.

Paul: *Guess what? I ate my spinach and it made me unfrozen!*

The best show on now that is violent is Xmen. It has people fighting and people saying cuss words.

– Child

What to remember ....

About 2's ...

Two-year olds use their hands to solve their problems. Two-year olds do not have the language to get what they want. They haven't developed the self-control to wait or to ask for help. Also, two-year olds get a kick out of using big and bad words. Two-year olds are not able to understand the concept of sharing even though they sometimes share.

About 3's ...

Three-year olds are learning better ways to show their feelings than seen in two-year olds. However, in stressful times three-year olds may go back to using their hands like two-year olds. Also, three-year olds don't think before getting angry or excited and usually don't remember the rules.

About 4's and 5's ...

Four- and five-year olds are better at understanding their feelings and the feelings of others. They can see different emotions but have problems looking at a problem through another person's eyes. These young children are beginning to share and to value sharing. They are also able to use words to express their feelings. These young children can often control themselves enough to ask for help when there is a problem.

Stages of growth

Young children are different in their abilities to understand others, have self control and manage their anger:

Age	Understanding Others	Self Control	Managing Anger
2-Year Olds	Unable to understand another's point of view	Begin to see limits and rules set by adults Young children do a lot of naming of feelings and describing situations	Can be taught to physically move away from angry situations
3-Year Olds	Unable to understand another's point of view	Begin to regulate behavior by talking to themselves Begin to learn what are acceptable and unacceptable ways to act	Can be taught to physically move away from angry situations
4-Year Olds	Begin to understand other points of view Can understand causes of feelings Can recognize facial expressions Begin to understand difference between doing something on purpose or by accident Respond helpfully if someone is upset	Begin to regulate behavior by talking to themselves Begin to learn what are acceptable and un-acceptable ways to act Able to ask for help from adults and peers	Can be taught to adjust to situations without removing themselves Young children use self talk to calm down and problem solve
5-Year Olds	Able to recognize a wide range of emotions Can give reasons for the way they feel Make better distinctions between on purpose or by accident Begin to develop an idea of fairness	Begin to control their behavior internally by thinking and talking to self and explaining to others Able to ask for help from adults or peers	Can be taught to adjust to angry situations without removing themselves Young children use self talk to calm down and problem solve

What can we do to improve young children's self control?

There are many actions early childhood educators can take that will help young children develop important skills, skills that will help them understand others, gain control over their feelings, and manage their anger. Some of the most important ones are the actions listed below:

1. **Set clear, consistent and fair limits for behavior.** Create the rules with young children. When young children are involved in setting the rules they feel more responsibility for the rules.

2. **Remember that young children make mistakes.** They need to be reminded about rules.

3. **Redirect young children to better activities and behaviors.**

4. **Help young children learn to solve problems.** One way to do this is to read stories which have conflict in them. Help young children figure out how the problem was solved and how they felt about the solution. Help them to come up with several different ways a problem could be solved and everyone wins. These steps can also be used when watching TV and with TV stories and characters.

5. **Remind young children of rules and the reasons why we have rules.**

6. **Be sure to listen to young children when they talk about their feelings and problems.** Help young children learn about their feelings and the feelings of others. (See ideas in the next section, *"How Can We Help Young Children Understand Feelings?"*)

7. **Set realistic expectations for how young children will play together.** Remember how children play depends on the child's age.

8. **Prepare the learning area by providing many choices for play.** Organize the play area so that young children play in small areas with a focus on a certain type of activity. Large, open spaces encourage rough play.

9. **Play with the young children!** Ask the young children open-ended questions as they play like: " Tell me about_____", "What happened then?", "Why did it happen?", "What happens next?", "What do you need?", "Tell me about what you are making." Even though there is a lot to take care of, we need to take time to play with the young children!

10. **Give children chances to feel they have power or control.** Listen to children. Give them choices of activities whenever possible. When decisions are being made, try to involve young children in as many ways as possible.

Teaching Problem-Solving to Young Children

Help them decide...

1. What is the problem?
2. What can each child do?
3. What might happen if . . . ?
4. Choose an idea and use it.
5. Is it working? If not, what can I do now?

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To ban or not to ban?

This is one of the most difficult issues for early childhood educators to address. Young children bring violent ideas from TV and from their world to the classroom. This may be in the form of a karate chop or a finger-created weapon. Most educators ban the behavior because it can become dangerous or it does not fit with our values. However, when young children act this way, we need to be ready to deal with it.

Since banning the behavior often only works when the adult is watching, making the behavior safer is another choice. Use the safety rule: Explain to young children that they may use their ideas but they can't hurt anyone. They must be safe. They could make their finger a freeze gun or they can karate chop into the air. Maybe you can even give the young children a karate chop area but only one child at a time may use it. Once TV play becomes less exciting and is no longer completely forbidden, many young children may lose interest.

If you are considering banning certain toys, actions, characters, etc., you may find it helpful to ask yourself these questions:

- Why do I feel _____ (weapons, martial arts play, superheroes, etc.) should be banned?
- What will happen when I say no to the above?
- What will I do when a child says "My parent has a gun, is a police officer, a soldier?"; "My mommy lets me play this way", etc.?

You may want to share your responses to these questions and the thinking that led to your rules with your parents.

How to use time-out

When should we use time-out?

Time-out is used when children get out of control and need help to get themselves under control.

What is the role of time-out?

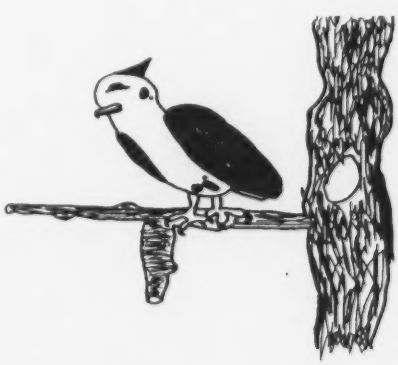
The time-out chair gives children a chance to think about their behavior and calm down. Since we want children to spend time thinking about what they have done, some people call this the "thinking chair." Children need to have explained to them why they are in time-out for this disciple method to be effective.

How long should a child be in time-out?

The length of the time-out will vary because children develop a sense of self-control gradually and their attention spans vary, depending on the child and the problem. However, a general guideline is that time-out should coincide with the age of the child. For example, a 2-year old should be in time-out for 2 minutes, a 3-year old for 3 minutes, etc...

Where should time-out be located?

Time-out should be conducted away from the center of activity. Educators should be able to observe children in time-outs but children in time-out should not be in a position to receive attention from their peers—but children should not be facing a corner.



How do we help young children understand feelings?

As shown in the previous sections, young children do not always understand how other people feel. We can help them develop skills in understanding other people's feelings through the activities listed below. These activities help young children think about their feelings and the feelings of others.

Activities:

1. Read stories which show different feelings (See Appendix A).

2. Encourage the young children to use " I" statements (For example, say "When you act that way, I get angry" instead of "You make me angry when you act that way"). Don't forget to use "I" statements yourself!

3. Pantomime feelings with the young children. Have them guess how you are feeling.

4. As a group make a mural of feelings.

5. Finger paint to show feelings using colors and shapes and lines.

6. Sing songs and change your voices to show different feelings.

7. Play "I feel_____ when_____."

8. Play "Tell me about a time when you felt..."

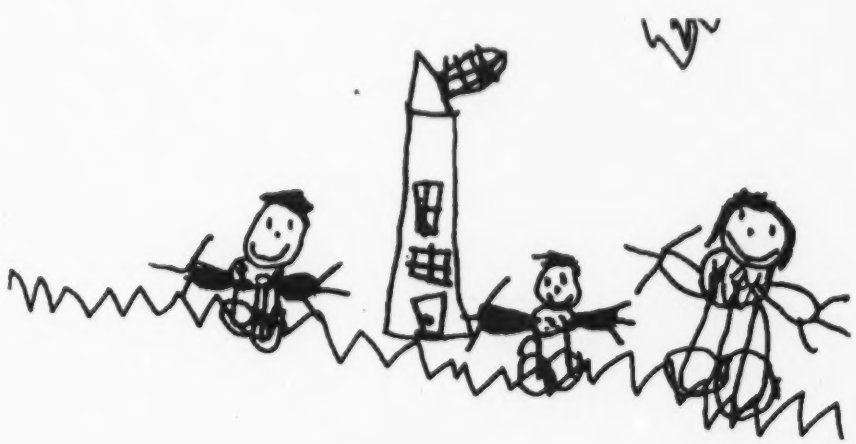
9. Play "What present would make you _____" (choose a feeling such as happy, sad, scared, angry, etc.).

10. Make popsicle stick faces to show different feelings. Tell short stories to young children about things that happen in their neighborhood, their school, or other places familiar to them. Ask young children to tell you how that makes them feel using their stick faces.

11. Read a book about "on purpose or by accident." Explain how sometimes a person doesn't mean to do something. Explain the difference between intent and accident. Role play what they would do if they ruined something, bumped into someone, spilled juice. etc.

12. Read stories which show problem solving (see Appendix A). Act out, draw, or use puppets to show how characters solved the problems.

13. Sing feeling songs like *If You're Happy and You Know It.*



How to communicate with parents

Early childhood educators frequently ask, "How do we talk to parents successfully? How do you get parents to care, understand, participate, and follow the rules?" One of the first things to do is to help them get a better understanding of how young children learn and the effects that TV violence has on that process.

Parents often have a lot of questions. Answering them can be the beginning to giving parents a good understanding of how their child learns through play. You can use the "*Questions Most Frequently Asked by Parents*" as a hand-out, an insert in a letter to parents of the young children in your charge, part of a program for a parents' night, or as information for your newsletter or local community paper.

Most parents want to be involved in their child's education. You could use the "*Sample Letter to Our Parents*" to let them know about the problems you see among young children, including their own, and give them specific actions they can take at home.

"*Some Facts About Kids and TV*" contains powerful information about how TV affects children. Use this in similar ways to "*Questions Most Frequently Asked by Parents.*"

The most important thing is to keep reaching out to parents—in conversations, in written information, at meetings. Use every opportunity to share information with them and to ask for their help in making sure their children learn and grow.

Questions most frequently asked by parents

1. Is all aggressive TV bad for my young children? Why?

It all depends on the individual child—his or her maturity and development. For some young children watching action programs on TV helps them gain a sense of strength and independence and feel powerful. But, research shows that parents must get involved in their child's TV viewing. They need to watch shows with their young children and talk about what they watch.

2. Why is play important to young children?

Play helps young children develop physically, intellectually and socially. Play shows us what issues are important to a child. Play helps young children understand their world. Since young children learn as they play, what they play and how they play affects what they learn.

3. What is imitative play?

Young children learn about the world through imitation and they imitate what they see. During imitative play, the child repeats specific actions without developing new props, characters, ideas, or story lines. Young children use imitative play as a way of understanding the world around them. Imitative is a elementary way for children to learn. Imitative play is often directly tied to television shows.

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Some imitations are good. For example, many children watch their parents care for infants and imitate these nurturing behaviors. Other imitations can be destructive and violent. Violent themes expressed in imitative play are often based on violent scenes watched on TV. For example, many children mimic martial arts behaviors they have seen on television which often result in others being hurt. Imitating violent TV does not help children learn positive play or social skills.

4. *Is imitative play necessarily bad for young children?*

No, it is the type of imitative play that is troublesome. If children are imitating events that are happening in the world around them, then they are using play to understand their world. The problem arises when young children use the violent actions from TV in their imitative play and begin to see it as a model for problem-solving.

5. *What is creative play?*

Creative play results from children building on their own experiences and turning play into a unique creation. During creative play, new props, characters, ideas, and story lines are invented by the child.

6. *How can imitative play negatively affect young children's development?*

Intellectual development suffers when young children do not use the content from their own experience to create their play.

Imitative play is "scripted" by someone else and doesn't promote creative use of a child's imagination.

Social development suffers when young children follow scripted violent play. This type of play does not allow young children to practice and develop strong social skills. Rather, through imitating violent play and applying this play to other situations in their lives, young children learn aggressive, anti-social skills.

Emotional development suffers when young children do not spend time working out issues in personally meaningful and creative ways.

7. *How does violent TV influence children's development?*

Young children who watch violent programs tend to hold attitudes and values that favor the use of violence to solve problems.

Young children who watch violent programs tend to use imitative rather than creative play which hinders their intellectual, social, and emotional development.

Young children who watch violent programs often develop exaggerated fears.

8. *How can we identify whether play is imitative or creative, violent or non-violent?*

The best way to identify whether play is imitative or creative is by observing young children's play.

As you observe a child's play, ask the following questions:

- What themes are important in the child's play?
- How does the play change during the play period?
- Is there variety in characters, stories, and materials?
- Are the characters, stories, and materials repetitive?
- Where do the ideas for play come from?
- Is the child creating his or her own ideas for play?
- What everyday experiences are expressed in play?
- What are the allies and enemies like?
- Who wins and how do they win?
- What do they fight over?
- Are all conflicts solved by violence?
- Does the play connect to real life?

What can we do together?

Educators and parents can work together to:

1. *Act as role models, showing nonviolent ways to solve problems*

2. *Help young children to play in different ways, such as creative and cooperative play*

3. *Help young children understand that most programs on TV are performed by actors who are being paid to entertain us*

4. *Help young children understand the difference between real and pretend in developmentally appropriate ways*

We have a society of confused young children who need help and guidance. TV can't teach morals the way parents can.

- Head Start Instructor

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A sample letter to parents

DEAR PARENTS:

We need your help with a problem we are having at [name of program or school]. We are concerned about TV violence and how it is affecting the children. We are seeing [describe 2 - 3 incidents you have had at your program]. Much of this activity appears to be linked with the children watching violent TV shows.

All young children are learning about their world, what is real and what is pretend, what is right and what is wrong. We need your help in making sure your child doesn't confuse TV with the real world. Here are some things you can do to help:

1. Limit the amount of time your child watches television. Be a role model yourself.

2. Learn more about how television affects kids. We have some good information here that we can give you and some places that offer free materials to parents.

3. Watch programs with your children. Talk about the story line. How could the problem be solved differently? Without violence?

4. Explain to your children how violence is "faked" on TV.

5. Join a parents' group or community campaign concerned about children's shows on TV. We can give you names of some in this area and information about the Maryland Campaign for Kids' TV.

Thank you so much for your help. You are the most important person in your child's life. Together, we can make sure your child grows up healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Some facts about kids and TV

- The average American preschooler watches 3-1/2 hours of television a day. By the age of 8, most children are watching 4 hours a day.
- The average kindergarten student has watched 5,000 hours of TV. That's more time than he or she will spend in an elementary school classroom.
- Most children spend more time watching TV than they spend on any other waking activity including going to school.
- The average child probably sees more than 20,000 TV commercials in one year.
- More than 9 out of 10 food ads on Saturday morning television are for sugary cereals and candy bars, salty canned foods, fatty fast foods and chips, and other nutritionally flawed foods.
- While the level of violence in prime-time television is about 5 violent acts per hour, the level of violence in children's Saturday morning programming is about 32 violent acts per hour.
- By the time a child reaches 6th grade, he or she will have witnessed at least 8,000 murders and over 100,000 other acts of violence on TV.
- Children who watch a large number of aggressive programs also tends to hold attitudes and values that favor the use of aggression to resolve conflicts.

From: "When Pulling the Plug Isn't Enough . . . A Parent's Guide to TV", available from the ACY Kids' TV Campaign, Advocates for Children & Youth, 300 Cathedral Street, Suite 500, Baltimore, MD 21201 (410) 547-9200.

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. . . you can watch
anything on TV
its fun but you
can not watch
it all the time.

– Child

Appendices

Young Children's Books Recommended by Early Childhood Educators

These books were recommended by early childhood educators in Maryland and are available at many local public libraries as well as in public and private school libraries around the state.

Dramatic Play Themes

Folktales

The Three Billy Goats Gruff
Goldilocks and the Three Bears
The Three Little Pigs
Who's In Rabbit's House?
The True Story of the Three Little Pigs
The Three Little Javelinas
The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig
Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

Castles and Dragons

My Father's Dragon
Snow White
Elmer and the Dragon
The Popcorn Dragon
The Dragons of Blueland
The Red Knight
I'm Going on a Dragon Hunt
The Dragon in the Clock Box
Rapunzel
Rumpelstiltskin

Pirates

Come Away From the Water, Shirley
Grandma and the Pirates
Peter Pan

Space

Regards to the Man in the Moon
Harold and the Purple Crayon

Monsters and other scary things

Where the Wild Things Are
The Mysterious Tadpole
The Wizard of Oz
Heckedy Peg
There's an Alligator Under My Bed

Developing Self-Control

Fears

Spiders in the Fruit Cellar
Feeling Afraid
The Berenstain Bears and the Bad Dream
Anna Banana and Me
Fang
Ira Sleeps Over

Name-calling

I Sure Am Glad to See you, Blackboard Bear
Olivia Button Is a Sissy

Feelings

Kate's Quilt
I Hate My Brother Harry
Dina's Mad, Bad Wishes
It's Dark--But I'm Not Scared
I Wish I Were Sick, Too

That New Pet
Opening Night
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible,
No Good Very Bad Day
The Biggest, Meanest, Ugliest Dog
in the Whole Wide World
Boastful Mr. Bear
Ira Sleeps Over
Furlie Cat
Jafta
Tom in the Middle
Willie's Not the Hugging Kind
Old Henry
The Other Emily
The Last Puppy
Color of His Own
Turtle Tale
The Rainbow Fish
The Lady and the Spider

Control

No Fighting, No Biting
Thomas in Trouble
Where the Wild Things Are
The Day Jake Vacuumed

Friendship

We Are Best Friends
Look At Me
Will You Be My Friend Jessica

Feelings

A Bargain for Frances
Best Friends for Frances
Porcupine's Pajama Party
Will I Have a Friend?
Matthew and Tilly

Matthew and Tilly
Friends
Let's Be Enemies

Understanding others

Nosey Mrs. Rat
Arnie and the New Child
Bullying
The Grouchy Ladybug
Goggles

Accidents/Intentions

An Anteater Named Arthur
Letter to Amy
It Wasn't My Fault

Ignoring

The Very Busy Spider

Manners

Please Pass the Peas
Perfect Pigs: An Introduction to Manners

Listening

The Surprise Party

Sharing

The Doorbell Rang
It's Hard to Wait
Harriet's Halloween Candy
It's Mine
What Feels Best

Consequences

We're In Big Trouble, Blackboard Bear
Angry Arthur
Peter Rabbit
Sloppy Kisses
I Like Me

Self Talk

The Little Engine That Could
A Porcupine Named Fluffy

Brainstorming

Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present

The best thing about TV is the news. It tells us the weather, if it s going to be sunny, cold, cloudy and snow, or frosty.

– Child

Problem Solving

Brookie and Her Lamb
Bailey Goes Camping
Six Crows
Geraldine's Blanket
The Land of Many Colors
The Mystery of the Stolen Blue Paint
Roger Takes Charge
I Can't Wait
Benjamin and Tulip
Let's Be Friends Again
Katharine's Doll
The Hating Book
The Elephant in Duck's Garden
I Want It
My Name Is Not Dummy
The Berenstain Bears Get in a Fight
Everykid's Guide to Decision Making and Problem Solving
It's Mine
So What?
Pookins Gets Her Way
Hazel's Amazing Mother
Noisy Nora
Bootsie Barker Bites
Mean Soup

Imagination

Imagine

Professional Resources

These materials were recommended by early childhood educators in Maryland as being practical and valuable tools, particularly for staff development.

I. Resources for understanding development in young children

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through 8
National Association of Education for Young Children

Social and Moral Development in Young Children
Carolyn Pope Edwards

What To Expect: The Toddler Years
Eisenburg, Murkoff and Hathaway

II. Resources for dealing with violent play

A Very Practical Guide to Discipline
Grace Mitchell

Who's Calling the Shots
Nancy Carlsson-Paige & Diane E. Levin

Teaching Young Children in Violent Times
Diane E. Levin

III. Resources for understanding play

Ages and Stages
Karen Miller

Things To Do With Toddlers and Two's
Karen Miller

IV. Resources for helping children solve problems

Second Step: A Violence Prevention Program (ages 4 - 6)
Committee for Children
3203 Airport Way, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98134-2027
(800) 634-4449

Peace-Making Skills for Little Kids
Fran Schmidt & Alice Friedman

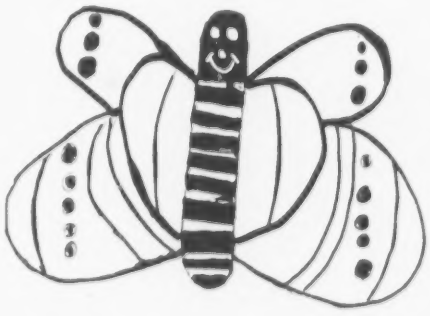
V. Resources for dealing with parents

When Pulling the Plug Isn't Enough... A Parent's Guide to TV
ACY Kids' TV Campaign, Advocates for Children and Youth, 300 Cathedral Street, Suite 500, Baltimore, MD 21201
(410) 547-9200

VI. Resources for theme teaching

Story Stretchers
Shirley Raines

VII. Resources for creative dramatic techniques



The Creative Classroom: A Guide for Using Creative Drama in the Classroom PreK-6
Lenore Blank Kelner, InterAct Story Theatre, Silver Spring, MD
1-800-276-8087

Creative Drama in the Early Childhood Classroom (videotape/VHS) *InterAct Story Theatre, Silver Spring, MD 1-800-276-8087*

What the research shows . . .

- Study of 1st and 2nd graders in rural Canadian town showed 160% increase in aggression two years after the introduction of television *(Williams)*

- Amount of television watched at age eight predicted seriousness of criminal acts at age 30; and these adults punished their own children more severely than parents who had watched less TV *(Eron)*

- A 29-year comparison of white homicide rates among U.S., Canada and South Africa showed the U.S. and Canada rates increased by 93% and 92% respectively; South Africa, which banned television broadcasting until 1975, experienced a 7% decrease *(Centerwall)*

- Teenage boys who had watched above-average amounts of TV violence before adolescence committed acts of serious violence 49% more frequently than other teenage boys *(Belson, commissioned by CBS)*

- 34% of young felons surveyed reported they imitated crime techniques learned from television; overall, this group had watched twice as much television as other children *(Heller, commissioned by ABC)*

Survey of Early Childhood Care Providers and Educators

Trends and General Findings

Statistical findings have been calculated for a sample of 250 surveys; general trends and information on open-ended questions have been distilled from the more than 700 surveys returned.

How many children do you care for in your class or group? For how many hours per day? Statistical average of 250 surveys: 19 children for nearly 7 hours/day

In what county is your program located? To date, we have received surveys from all 24 jursidictions; in total we have received over 700.

Which categories describe your child care/ education setting? (check all that apply): Surveys have been returned from centers (40%), family-based providers (22%) and school-based settings (38%), giving a wide variety of perspectives from child care (28%), preschool (21%), before/after care (8%) and traditional education levels (22%). 20% of the respondents care for children in multiple types of programs. Nearly half of the providers are from Head Start, EEEP, Kindergarten or 1st grade programs.

Which toys do children play with in your program while they are in your care? (check all that apply):

--------- **toy guns** -------- **toy knives**
--------- **martial arts toys** -------- **toy swords**
-------- **action figures**

Very few of the providers allow children to bring these types of toys from home. However, several caregivers reported that children build make-shift toys to use in school from supplies such as blocks.

How many hours is the TV on or are videos in use during the day when children are present?

How many hours per day is the TV or are videos used to educate children?
Very few providers reported using television on a daily basis; instead, most said that TV or videos were used only occasionally to compliment an educational unit such as science or nature. Family-based providers were the most likely to use television, where children are in care for longer periods of time. In fact, a handful said the TV was on 6 or more hours per day.

Which TV shows or types of videos are watched most often by children while in your care? Disney or educational videos were the most commonly reported programs offered besides traditional public television programming. Just a small portion of family-based providers reported titles of any commercial network programs.

Thinking of the children in your class/ group:
What TV themes do you observe in children's play?

-------- **police**	-------- **martial arts**
-------- **comedy**	-------- **hospital**
-------- **war**	-------- **other (describe):**

Two-thirds of those responding reported that they observe martial arts themes in children's play. Other very common themes included police (38%) and hospital (26%).

What TV characters are children imitating? (please list):
Just about every single provider indicated that children are imitating power rangers or other martial arts characters in their play behaviors; other characters that were consistently reported include Xmen, VR Troopers, and Ninja Turtles. Cartoon characters from videos (Disney), public TV (Sesame Street and Barney) and some commercial shows (Simpsons) were also reported.

How concerned are you about the impact of TV on children's play? (circle one):

Not concerned
Somewhat concerned
Very concerned

95% of the providers responding said that they were concerned about the impact of TV on children's play, and overall, 66% reported that they were VERY Concerned.

Have you seen an increase in aggressive behavior in children in recent years? Y N

78% reported having seen a recent increase in aggressive behavior in children.

What impact do you think violence in their lives (e.g. street violence, domestic violence) has on the children in your class/ group?

No impact
Some impact
Large impact

Although this question probably cannot be generalized or interpreted literally, 43% of providers reported that community violence has a large impact on children. Another 37% reported some impact of violence in children's lives, but this effect may be from the media or other sources not from directly witnessing first hand violence.

For what portion of children in your group is aggressive play a problem?

Small (less 20%)
Moderate (21-50%)
Large (more than 50%)

Luckily, only 4% of providers reported that aggressive play was a problem in a large portion of their students. Generally, aggressive play is a problem for less than 20% of the kids in any given group (64% of responses).

How do children usually show aggression? (check all that apply):

playing
story telling
other (please describe):
drawing
imitation/mimicking

Children generally show aggression during their free play times or outdoor recess periods. Playing and imitating were the behaviors usually used to show the aggression.

How FREQUENTLY do you see the following aggressive behaviors? Daily:

Hitting	**(55%)**
Kicking	**(43%)**
Biting	**(18%)**
Martial Arts	**(55%)**
Verbal threats of physical violence	**(36%)**

Providers reported daily instances of many behaviors, including hitting and martial arts activities. Biting was the least frequent behavior. For all 5 of the specific behavior choices given, providers indicated that boys exhibited the behavior more frequently than girls.

What are the typical targets for children's aggression? (check all that apply):

Children typically target aggression on other children; in these settings, children were most likely to be of the same age group (87%). In some family-based settings, providers indicated that children used a younger child (34%). 35% of the providers reported that toys were used, 23% reported aggression against adults. Children were more likely to target themselves (9%) than an animal (6%).

What techniques do you use to handle children with aggressive behaviors? (please describe techniques and situations when you might use them):

Teachers and child care providers very consistently reported that they use techniques to separate the child from the situation and mentioned "time out" in most cases. It was most likely that the child would be removed from the group or redirected to another

activity. Some providers reported that they talk with the child about what happened, but most said they use some sort of reprimand. Some use techniques to get the aggressive child to empathize with the "victim," but very few reported teaching or using peer to peer conflict resolution methods.

Most of the immediate-response methods to separate a child from an aggressive situation were assessed by the providers as at least somewhat effective, but many reported that the effect of this intervention was not long-lasting.

Are there resources or materials you use when handling aggressive behaviors? Y N If yes, what resources or materials? If any particular resources were mentioned, they were likely other staff, particular workshop materials and specific books regarding discipline techniques. Only a few reported using materials like puppets to demonstrate principles to children. Similarly, a few reported using alternate toys for children who need to let out aggression/anger/energy, including bean bag chairs, bo-bo dolls, biting toys, or clay.

What would you find helpful in a handbook for providers about working with children who have learned aggressive behaviors from television and from witnessing other violence? The most commonly reported needs were for specific techniques to use in explaining to parents what children are learning from violent TV, movies and toys. This appeal for help with parents was pervasive, especially in programs where the providers were not sure that behaviors taught in school were being reinforced at home.

Providers are looking for specific methods that their peers find successful and have long-term effects when working with children who are aggressive. They would like t know how to use a negative event to benefit the class, by having some skills in explaining the situation to other children in the class who have witnessed the event.

More resources for your program: Our advisory panel

The following individuals served on our advisory panel to create **MOVING YOUNG CHILDREN'S PLAY AWAY FROM TV VIOLENCE: A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS**. Each has a wealth of expertise, knowledge and ideas and may be a possible resource for your program and the issues you are dealing with.

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Advocates for Children and Youth
300 Cathedral Street, Suite 500
Baltimore, MD 21201
410/547-9200
Fax 410/547-8690

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Community Initiatives
United Way of Central Maryland
22 Light Street, P.O. Box 1576
Baltimore, MD 21203-1576
410/547-8000 ext. 286
Fax 547-0323

Dr. Elizabeth Legenhausen
Association of Independent Maryland Schools
c/o St. James Academy
3100 Monkton Road
Monkton, MD 21111
410/771-4816
Fax 771-4842

Sara Mandell
Mayor's Office for Children, Youth, and Families
10 South Street, Suite 100
Baltimore, MD 21202
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Shari Ostrow-Scher
Early Childhood Coordinator
Frederick County Public Schools
115 E. Church Street
Frederick, MD 21701
301/694-1347 or 694-1623
Fax 301/694-1800

Justine Parezo, Director of Training
Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center
1401 Mt. Royal Avenue, 3rd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21217
410/728-8844
Fax 410/523-8082
(Offer training series on violence prevention and other resources)

Lori Rogovin, Director Public Policy
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Charlene Hughins Uhl
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Arnold, MD 21012-1895
410/768-4351
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Evaluation Form

Moving Young Children's Play Away from TV Violence:
A How-To Guide for Early Childhood Educators

As an early childhood educator and someone who works with young children every day, your input is very important. Please take a few moments to answer the questions below. Thank you!

Location of your program _____

Your position _____

Circle the type of program: Family day care | Child care center | Head Start
Nursery school | Preschool | Kindergarten
Other (please describe) _____

How did you receive a copy of this guide?

_____ From an organization of which you are a member. If so, please name organization:
_____

_____ Part of staff development. If so, who conducted the training?
_____

_____ Ordered from the Ready At Five Partnership. If so, where did you learn of the guide?
_____

_____ Other (please describe) _____

How would you rate this guide overall?
Excellent | Very good | Good | Fair | Poor

How would you rate this guide in providing you with information or ideas you can use with the young children with whom you work ?
Excellent | Very good | Good | Fair | Poor

How would you rate this guide in adding to your knowledge and understanding of TV violence and young children?
Excellent | Very good | Good | Fair | Poor

Please rate each section on its usefulness to your program:

Introduction
Extremely useful | Very useful | Useful | Not useful

What other information would you like to have in this section? _____

Other comments on this section _____

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Understanding real and pretend

Extremely useful Very useful Useful Not useful

What other information would you like to have in this section? _____

Other comments on this section _____

Teaching children to pretend

Extremely useful Very Useful Useful Not useful

What other information would you like to have in this section? _____

Other comments on this section _____

Teaching children to play creatively

Extremely useful Very useful Useful Not useful

What other information would you like to have in this section? _____

Other comments on this section _____

Gaining self-control

Extremely useful Very useful Useful Not useful

What other information would you like to have in this section? _____

Other comments on this section _____

Communicating with parents

Extremely useful Very useful Useful Not useful

What other information would you like to have in this section? _____

Other comments on this section _____

Appendices

Extremely useful Very useful Useful Not useful

What other information would you like to have in this section? _____

Other comments on this section _____

Please FAX YOUR RESPONSE to (410) 547-8690 or mail to:

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Baltimore, MD 21201

. . . the best thing about

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- Child

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